Literary Venturers of the Day

III.—Frederick O'Brien.

"TRAMP, Sailor, Lawyer, Beachcomber, Reporter, Editor, Sandwichman, Barkeeper, Kitchen Helper, State Food Administrator, Dreamer, Adventurer, Man of Mystery." Such is the catalogue of Frederick O'Brien's different incarnations as given by the publishers of his books. Certainly no one will question his eligibility as a member of the "Literary Venturers of the Day" Club. Yet since the enumeration of these varied activities Mr. O'Brien has not been giving himself up to idling in a humdrum existence. Not content with existing qualifications, he has been adding to them. Recently he has made an extended trip to the South Seas, and his third book, to carry on the spirit of "White Shadows in the South Seas" and "Mystic Isles of the South Seas," is scheduled for publication next autumn. At the present time he is at the Jack London ranch in California working on the book.

The story of the writing of "White Shadows in the South Seas" has been told, but in view of the striking popularity of the book and its own intrinsic interest is always worth retelling. It was Mr. O'Brien's first book. During a year among the South Sea Islands he wrote the first draft, setting down at night the things he had seen and heard during the day. Returning to one of his homes in California, he rewrote the book during a year of idleness except, as he says, "for occasional industry among my roses or in building arbors, ponds and housings for my fowls." During the time of America's participation in the world war the manuscript was lying forgotten in a closet. After the armistice it found its way to its publishers.

Born in Baltimore, the son of a judge who was also a member of Congress, Frederick O'Brien was sent to a Jesuit school. His father designed him for the law, but the boy had been reading such romances as "Coral Island" and "Two Years Before the Mast," and the reading had molded his destiny. Romance called. At eighteen he shipped out of Baltimore before the mast on the Julia Robbins. Leaving the vessel at Rio de Janeiro, he tramped over Brazil working as a day laborer. Then he went to Venezuela and the island of Trinidad, where he worked at the asphalt lake. As sailor, laborer or sightseer he saw many of the West India islands.

That was his first taste of life as a venturer. The time came when he returned home with the idea of settling down. In his father's office in Baltimore he read law. But it was only for a period. The call of the beyond was too imperative. One day he left the office. That night he was "bedding down" cattle on a steamship bound for London. In London he spent a week as a sandwichman advertising pills. Then he went to Paris and found a position on the Paris edition of THE NEW YORK HERALD. With money earned there he toured the Continent. His last franc gone, he returned to New York in the galley of a freighter, peeling potatoes.

Then he turned to the West, becoming a hobo, traveling on trains without the formality of buying a railway ticket, raking hay, "babbitting" threshing machines, riding horses and otherwise gaining his livelihood. In a Mississippi levee camp he tended bar; he drove mules to scrapers and loafed down the river to New Orleans. In California he joined Coxey's army, and with it traveled to Washington, and there walked on the grass of the Capitol lawn in an effort to present a "petition in boots" to Congress for the appropriation of money for building the national highway that was to give work at $1 a day to all unemployed men.

Some years of more sedate work followed. He turned to journalism, became a reporter on the Marion *Star*, owned by Warren G. Harding, and later an editorial writer on a Columbus paper. From Columbus he went to New York, and then to Chicago, working on various newspapers. Again in California, he kept on with newspaper work. In the old San Francisco of the days before the earthquake he got to know the waterfront and the bizarre cosmopolitanism of the city as few men did. He saw men shanghaied, shot and hanged. There, too, he first felt the pull of the South Seas and the Orient. But before setting out he thought it wise to learn Spanish, and for that purpose went to southern California.

In Hawaii Frederick O'Brien had his first taste of the Pacific semi-tropics. There he swam with the Kanakas, studied the Hawaiian tongue and put in thirteen or fourteen hours a day running a newspaper. He brought the first woman reporter west of San Francisco, and employed the first cartoonist in Hawaii. His exposures drove the blood money crimps from the port, and his chief reporter was shot by the editor of the opposition paper. Then he visited the Molokai leper settlement, the volcano of Kilauea, the extinct crater of Haleakala, and in a four masted schooner made an eighteen days' journey to San Francisco.

After a year or two as a free lance writer in the States Frederick O'Brien again started for the East, spending a year in China and Japan, and then helping to publish a daily American paper in the Philippines. From Manila as correspondent of THE NEW YORK HERALD he wandered all over the Far East, going twenty-six times to China. As a writer on the Japanese-Russian war he scored a noted "beat" in one of the great events of the struggle. Then, moving westward, he completed the circle of the globe.

Again in California, he plunged into politics, writing political articles, supporting Hiram Johnson, speaking for woman's suffrage, the initiative and referendum and the recall of judges. He owned two newspapers at different times, and after selling one embarked hastily for Tahiti. For a year in the Society, the Paumota and Marquesan islands he led the life of a beachcomber who pays his scot but who picks the acquaintance of the most interesting natives and whites and wanders in the remote corners. Such is Frederick O'Brien. From Paris to Hong Kong his stories have been famous among his friends in exclusive club as in sailors' dive.

IV.—Harry A. Franck.

THE outline of the career of Harry A. Franck differs from that of Frederick O'Brien merely in details and not in spirit. Here is Franck's *dossier*, as compiled by his publishers: "Bachelor of Arts, Farmer, Woodsman, Blacksmith's Helper, Circus Clown, Billposter, Ticketseller, Policeman, Teacher, Market Gardener, Cellar Digger, Mattress Maker, Bottle Washer, Waiter, Athletic Coach, Lecturer." As in addition to the activity and *wanderlust* indicated, he is the author of "A Vagabond Journey Around the World," "Roaming Through the West Indies," "Tramping Through Mexico, Guatemala and Honduras," "Vagabonding Down the Andes" and "Working North from Patagonia," he, too, is fully eligible to membership in that imaginary "Literary Venturers of the Day" club. Nor does he, any more than O'Brien, seem disposed to settle down to an ordinary existence. At the present writing he is in Japan, on his way to China. He will do the parts of Japan that tourists do not know, go briefly into Corea and give probably an entire year to China, which he will see and feel in his customary, thorough way before writing about it. Out of his two year trip to the East he will get a book on China, some magazine articles and possibly a book on Japan, Corea and Manchuria.

Born in Munger, Bay county, Michigan, Harry A. Franck had the discipline of frequent application of a hickory buggy spoke at his father's hand, seven years at the "little red school house" and a more stimulating education in the nickel novels of Frank Merriwell. Then came high school, during which he prepared himself for future dexterity in finding temporary jobs on his travels by doing blacksmithing, farming, selling newspapers and tackling almost everything about a theater from billposting to ticket selling. Then he went to the University of Michigan and at Ann Arbor made an arrangement with a hotel proprietor that gave him room and board in return for his services as clerk, porter, chambermaid and waiter. After that he waited on table in a college boarding house and thus got through his first university year. But for the moment he was too anxious to go about his real business of exploring the unconventional parts of the earth.

He ran away to England, crossing the Atlantic on a cattle boat, with $3.18 in his pocket. Arriving in Manchester, he walked to London, lived there eight days, walked to Brighton and found that his $3.18 was entirely gone. After some work as a stevedore he returned to London, bought a ticket for Paris, spent ten days at the exposition of 1900 and returned to London. With three shillings he set out for Liverpool, living chiefly on raw turnips during the journey. He signed as "able seaman" on a vessel bound for Montreal, and from Montreal hoboed home, reaching the university two weeks late. In much the same way were the summers of the subsequent years at Ann Arbor spent. Graduated from the University of Michigan in 1903, he became a graduate student at Harvard.

After a brief experience at school teaching he began to travel in earnest, circling the globe in fifteen months. That was the trip that yielded the material for "A Vagabond Journey Around the World." The book was written at odd times when he was employed as a teacher of modern languages in Bellefonte Academy in Pennsylvania. Submitting the material in parts for magazine publication, the author added to his experience a wide knowledge of printed slips of rejection. Then a few of the articles were accepted, and finally the book appeared, to win instant recognition and favor.

While he was teaching school and working on his first book Mr. Franck made a walking tour through Spain. After the publication of "A Vagabond Journey Around the World" he used the Spanish material in "Four Months Afoot in Spain." In his thirtieth year he swore off from school work and set out on a single trip that was to last four full years. The first stage took him through Mexico, Guatemala and to Panama, where he worked five months as a Canal Zone policeman. He had left Milwaukee for the trip on September 13, 1911. He had landed at Panama January 21, 1912. On June 18, 1912, he sailed for further exploration which was to take him to every country in South America. He has summed up that journey in his own words:

"During the 1,461 days' journey I slept in 571 different spots, or, in other words, moved on an average of once in every two and a half days. It was not always cheaper than paying rent. Besides most of Mexico and Central America, I visited every country and colony in South America, and the majority of the States and provinces of each country. Leaving entirely out of account innumerable side trips and city explorations, I seem roughly to have walked some 5,000 miles, while the distance covered by other means of locomotion is beyond my arithmetic. I have returned from the journey in fully as good health, physically, mentally and, I trust, morally, as when I set out, and seem to have suffered only one misfortune, serious and incurable; that of being four years older than the day I started."

When the war came Harry A. Franck volunteered, went to Plattsburg, won a lieutenant's commission, and was soon on his way to France, where he served until after the armistice. He was at Gen. Pershing's headquarters as translator censor and interpreter, and saw action in France and in Italy. After the war he returned to America, married, and his "Roaming Through the West Indies" was the literary result of his honeymoon trip.

Two literary venturers of the day. Harry A. Franck, author of "A Vagabond Journey Around the World," &c. (left), and Frederick O'Brien, author of "White Shadows in the South Seas," &c. (right). This picture was taken in California, where Mr. Franck, on his way to China, ran across Mr. O'Brien.

The Washington Conference

THE WASHINGTON CONFERENCE. By Raymond Leslie Buell. D. Appleton & Co.

HERE is an examination of the history and recent status of the problems that the Washington conference was called to meet, of the methods by which first and last it dealt with them and of the prospects that the treaties signed there may clarify and smooth out the difficulties destined to arise in more or less acute form in the relatively near future in the Orient.

It is an essay in political science possessing a distinctive thoroughness. The record of Japanese expansion in Asia, supported by the Anglo-Japanese Alliance; the internal organization of the empire, the democratic and liberal movement there, the population pressure that gives force to the militarists' ambitions, are accurately delineated and related to the diplomatic skirmishes to which they have given rise. Mr. Buell is much more critical of the accomplishments of the conference than others who have written books on the subject.

Mr. Buell considers that the Harding Administration sought chiefly an agreement for naval limitation rather than a way to prevent Japanese domination of Asia, and that to get the naval treaty it had to acquiesce in a policy of military non-intervention which, in the four Power treaty, recognized the Japanese as supreme from a military standpoint in the eastern Pacific. Japan does not need a navy to dominate the mainland, and only an enormous army could hope to prevent her doing so. The conference succeeded as to fleets, but as to China and Siberia it gently informed them to save themselves if they could from Japanese imperialism.

The crucial factor in the Far East is likely to be the future political and industrial organization of Japan. Her population problem, though acute, has been exaggerated by the militarists, who make expansionist capital out of it. Her agriculture could produce much more. If the country were to become thoroughly industrialized the population question would be solved for years to come. But to do this Japan would need to sell in the world's markets in competition with manufactures of other countries, and this her tariff and ours, if kept high, will make impossible.